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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
USS TARAWA (LHA 1)
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MAR 16 1993

From: Commanding Officer, USS TARAWA (LHA-1)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)
Subj: **COMMAND HISTORY (OPNAV REPORT 5750-1)**
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E
Encl: (1) USS TARAWA Officer Precedence List

The calendar year 1992 Command History for the USS TARAWA (LHA-1) is submitted in accordance with reference (a).

1. Command Composition and Organization.

a. **Mission and Function of the Command:** The Amphibious Task Force, which executes its tasks in support of the Navy's force projection mission, is composed of LHA, LPH, LPD, LSD, LKA and LST class ships. TARAWA, the lead ship of the LHA class of general purpose amphibious assault ships, combines the functional capabilities of the LPH, LPD, LSD, and the LKA to deliver a balanced payload, by air or surface operations, in an amphibious assault. Explicitly, a former Chief of Naval Operations defined the LHA's mission: "To embark, deploy and land elements of a Marine Landing Force in an assault by helicopter, landing craft, amphibious vehicles and by an combination of these methods."

b. **Commanding Officer:**

Nigel E. Parkhurst, Captain
U.S. Navy,
Lineal Number: 001868-10, DOR: 01 August 1984

c. **Command Structure:**

Commander Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Amphibious Squadron Nine
USS Tarawa (LHA-1)

d. **Home Port:** TARAWA was homeported in San Diego, California for the year.

e. **Command Composition:** The command was composed of USS TARAWA (LHA-1) and organic assets which included one UH-1N Helicopter (Buno160832). Ship's company included 63 officers and 865 enlisted as of 31 December 1992.

2. Chronology.

01-06 Jan	Inport San Diego, California for leave and upkeep.
07-10 Jan	Underway for sea trials in SOCAL OPAREA
10 Jan	Moored Naval Station San Diego

21 Jan	Underway for TRE in SOCAL OPAREA. Anchored in Coronado Roads
24 Jan	Underway. Moored at Naval Station San Diego. Completed TRE.
27 Jan	Commenced Mobile Team Training Phase 2 (Engineering)
28 Jan	Underway for engineering drills in SOCAL OPAREA in conjunction with MTT.
30 Jan	Moored Naval Station San Diego.
10 Feb	Underway for ammunition onload
11-12 Feb	Anchored in Coronado Roads for ammunition onload.
13 Feb	Underway for training in SOCAL OPAREA. Completed ammunition onload. Moored Naval Station San Diego.
18 Feb	Underway for REFTRA in SOCAL OPAREA.
19 Feb	Anchored in San Diego Bay. Underway for SOCAL OPAREA
21 Feb	Moored Naval Station San Diego.
24 Feb	Underway for REFTRA in SOCAL OPAREA
28 Feb	Completed REFTRA, moored Naval Station San Diego
03 Mar	Underway for MTT Phase Three in SOCAL OPAREA
06 Mar	Moored Naval Station San Diego.
09-13 Mar	Conducted CSA
24 Mar	Underway in SOCAL OPAREA for OPPE.
25 Mar	Moored Naval Station San Diego.
30-31 Mar	Commenced Supply Management/3M Assessment.
31 Mar	OSSN Grant and OSSN Gulka murdered in their San Diego apartment.
01 Apr	Underway for AIR/AMPHIB REFTRA
02 Apr	Anchored at Del Mar boat basin. Underway for SOCAL OPAREA
06 Apr	Completed AIR/AMPHIB REFTRA. Moored Naval Station San Diego.
08-09 Apr	Satisfactorily completed Supply Management/3M Assessment
13 Apr	Underway for SOCAL OPAREA for FLEET-EX92. Anchored at, and underway from Del Mar boat basin.

24 Apr	Completed FLEET-EX92. Moored Naval Station, San Diego
27 Apr	Transferred organic HH-1H helicopter to Naval Air Station North Island.
15 May	Underway in SOCAL OPAREA for Sea Trials and dependants/guest cruise. Anchored at Del Mar Boat Basin and conducted ammunition onload. Underway for SOCAL OPAREA.
16 May	Anchored in San Diego Bay for wet well operations and unloaded dependents/guests by LCU. Moored Naval Station San Diego.
28 May	Underway for deployment to the Western Pacific/Indian Oceans and Arabian Sea.
04 Jun	Moored Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
05 Jun	Underway for the Western Pacific.
20 Jun	Moored White Beach, Okinawa for fueling and stores onload.
23 Jun	Underway for Hong Kong.
26 Jun	Moored to buoy A-51, Hong Kong, B.C. for port visit.
01 Jul	Underway for Singapore.
06 Jul	Anchored Singapore, Man of War anchorage.
12 Jul	Underway for Arabian Gulf via Straits of Malacca
16 Jul	Casualty occurred to No. 1 Main Engine. Continued transit on No. 2 Main Engine.
18 Jul	Aircraft mishap occurred to CH-46 on deck in high winds with rotor blades improperly secured.
23 Jul	Set Readiness Condition III and modified Mine Zebra. Stationed mine watch.
24 Jul	Transitted Strait of Hormuz. Challenged by Omani naval authorities. At 0808 local, sighted sinking boat low in water and six survivors in liferaft. Launched SAR helo to rescue survivors and returned them to TARAWA for further transfer to Bahrain.
25 Jul	Moored at Mina Salman, Bahrain.
31 Jul	Underway for Kuwait Bay.
01 Aug	Anchored in Kuwait Bay.
03-19 Aug	Exercise Eager Mace 92-1/Native Fury.

20 Aug	Moored at Mina Salman, Bahrain. Completed No. 1 Main Engine repair.
27 Aug	Underway for Saudi Arabia.
28 Aug	Anchored vicinity Ras Al Mishab, Saudi Arabia for exercise Nautical Mantis.
29 Aug-06 Sep	Exercise Nautical Mantis
06 Sep	Underway for Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates.
08 Sep	Moored Jebel Ali for vehicle washdown.
10 Sep	Underway for Singapore. Transitted Strait of Hormuz. Set Readiness Condition IV and secured mine watch.
11 Sep	Received orders to proceed to vicinity of Mogadishu, Somalia
17 Sep	Arrived vicinity of Mogadishu.
21 Sep	Commenced operations in support of USAF flight operations transporting Pakistani security forces to Mogadishu and received visits from Audrey Hepburn and members of UNICEF.
23 Sep	Received U.N. Special Envoy to Somalia.
30 Sep	Crossed equator enroute to Diego Garcia
02 Oct	Commenced Crossing the Line Ceremony
12 Oct	Moored Fremantle, Australia.
14 Oct	Underway enroute Lancelin Operation Area.
18 Oct	CH-53 #22 lost front nose gear and made a successful emergency landing.
19 Oct	Moored Fremantle, Australia.
26 Oct	Underway enroute Guam.
30 Oct	Commenced Archepalagic transit through Indonesia via Lombok and Makassar Straits.
06 Nov	Moored Apra Harbor, Guam.
07 Nov	Underway enroute Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
13 Nov	Crossed International Date Line.
16 Nov	Moored Pearl Harbor.
17 Nov	Underway enroute Del Mar boat basin. Commenced Tiger Cruise.

24 Nov	Anchored Del Mar boat basin.
24 Nov	Underway enroute San Diego.
25 Nov	Main steam leak reported in aft main machinery room, ship goes to general quarters. One man is reported burned and in need of Medevac. Cause of casualty reported as rupture of 600 PSI steam root valve to the soot blower system. Coast Guard helo arrives to conduct medevac to UCSD Burn Center.
25 Nov	Moored Naval Station, San Diego.
26 Nov-31Dec	Inport San Diego, California for leave and upkeep.

3. **Narrative:** January 1992 found USS TARAWA pierside at Naval Station San Diego completing a holiday leave and upkeep period. Between 7 and 10 Jan, TARAWA successfully conducted post PRAV-91 sea trials in SOCAL.

From 21 to 24 Jan, a satisfactory **Training Readiness Evaluation, TRE**, was conducted by Fleet Training Group. On 27 and 28 Jan, Phase II of the Engineering Mobile Training Team, **MTT**, was conducted and graded satisfactory. Between 11 and 13 Feb, an ammunition onload was conducted while at anchor in Coronado Roads. On 18 Feb, TARAWA got underway to conduct engineering casualty control training and commence **REFTRA**. **REFTRA** was successfully completed on 28 Feb.

On 03 Mar, TARAWA got underway for **MTT Phase III** and moored at Naval Station San Diego 06 Mar having successfully completed that phase. Between 09 and 13 Mar, a **Combat Systems Assessment** was successfully conducted pierside. The Operational Propulsion Plant Examination, **OPPE**, commenced 24 Mar and was successfully completed 25 Mar.

Between 30 and 31 Mar the first phase of a **Supply Management/3M Assessment** was conducted by COMNAVSURFPAC. On the evening of 31 Mar, two crewmembers, OSSN Grant and OSSN Gulka were found murdered by gunshot in their San Diego apartment.

01 April TARAWA got underway for **Air/Amphibious REFTRA**. The ship initially conducted LCU operations then anchored at Del Mar boat basin on 02 Apr for AAV operations. LCAC operations were conducted on 03 and 04 Apr. A memorial wreath laying ceremony was held for OSSN Grant and OSSN Gulka on 05 Apr and that evening TARAWA rendered assistance to a small fishing vessel adrift near the San Onofre nuclear reactor. TARAWA found the vessel and remained on station until the Coast Guard arrived. TARAWA moored at Naval Station San Diego on 06 Apr.

From 08 to 09 Apr, the COMNAVSURFPAC Supply Management/3M Assessment was completed with a grade of SATISFACTORY.

On 13 Apr TARAWA got underway to participate in **FLEETEX 92-1** with COMPHIBRON ONE and ELEVENTH MEU (SOC) embarked. Various amphibious and air rehearsals and exercises were conducted from 13 to 24 Apr. An exercise NEO was conducted on 18 Apr and on 20 Apr an unsuccessful exercise raid on a Gas, Oil Platform (GOPLAT) in the Santa Barbara channel was held. A second, successful, raid was conducted on the platform on 22 Apr completing the SOC qualifications. On 24 Apr the final amphibious and air assault exercise was successfully conducted completing the **FLEETEX**. An ammunition onload was conducted that day. While returning to San Diego, TARAWA answered a distress call from the small vessel "Rachelle" taking on water south of Point Loma. TARAWA dispatched LCU 1652 to assist and notified the Coast Guard prior to mooring at Naval Station San Diego.

On 27 Apr, TARAWA conducted flight operations and launched her organic HH-1H helicopter "Eagle" for the last time for transfer to NAS North Island. Pilots were CDR Ruehe and MAJ Jannell.

On 15 May, TARAWA got underway for sea trials and a dependents day/guest cruise. Anchoring off Del Mar basin, an ammunition onload was again conducted to complete the deployment load out. On the morning of 16 Apr, TARAWA anchored in San Diego Bay and conducted wet-well operations to receive LCU's loaded with dependents and guests. Getting underway again, demonstration flight operations and gunnery exercises were held prior to returning to moor at the Naval Station.

On 26 Apr, flight operations were conducted while pierside to fly on the Air Combat Element, HMM-161, for deployment.

TARAWA got underway for deployment to the Western Pacific, Indian Oceans and Arabian Gulf on 28 May. Embarked were **Amphibious Squadron One**, commanded by Capt. B. J. Philips, USN, and **Eleventh Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)**, commanded Col. M.W. Hagee, USMC. Also embarked were **Fleet Surgical Team Three**, **Assault Craft Unit Assault Element One Detachment Four** (LCU's 1616, 1636, 1646, and 1646), **Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Three Detachment Nine**, **Tactical Air Control Squadron Twelve Detachment One** and **Helicopter Combat Support Squadron Eleven Detachment Four**. Marine aircraft were embarked from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron One Six One (reinforced) and VMA211 consisting of CH-46s, UH-1s, AH-1s, CH-53Es and AV-8Bs. This would be the first operational deployment of the new night attack version of the Harrier. Other units in the Amphibious Ready Group were **USS OGDEN**, LPD-5, **USS FORT FISHER**, LPD-40, and **USS SCHENECTADY**, LST-1185.

Various flight operations and other exercises were conducted during the first leg of the transit with TARAWA mooring at **Naval Station Pearl Harbor** 04 Jun. TARAWA got underway 05 Jun for the **Western Pacific** successfully shooting down a target drone during a CIWS firing exercise that same day. TARAWA continued her transit eastward and arrived at **White Beach**, Okinawa 20 Jun to refuel and load stores.

TARAWA got underway on 23 Jun and transitted to **Hong Kong** for a port visit mooring to buoy A-51 in Hong Kong harbor on 26 Jun. TARAWA was able to enjoy a full five day port visit in spite of two tropical cyclones that just missed Hong Kong.

On 01 Jul TARAWA got underway for Singapore and five days later anchored at the **Man of War Anchorage**, Singapore for a short availability period.

On 12 Jul, TARAWA got underway and completed transitting the **Straits of Malacca**. Just prior to entering the **Bay of Bengal** on 16 Jul TARAWA sustained a casualty to the bearing of the first reduction pinion for the LP turbine of No. 1 Main Engine. Number One Main Engine was stopped and locked and would remain so until late Aug.

Heavy rolls were experienced, some as high as 23 degrees while transitting the **North Arabian Sea** during the seasonal southwest monsoon. Seas as high as 12 feet and winds as great as 35 knots were observed. On the evening of 18 Jul severe rotor head damage occurred to a Marine CH-46 aircraft undergoing maintenance on the bow while the ship passed through a rain squall. Rotor blades were not properly secured and observed winds across the deck were 42 knots. There were no personnel injuries.

Due to the casualty to the main engine, the remainder of the ARG proceeded on ahead of TARAWA, which was left to cross the North Arabian Sea making good a speed of approximately seven knots.

TARAWA entered the **Gulf of Oman** on 23 Jul and set Readiness Condition III watch station and material condition modified mine Zebra. Condition III also included mine watches stationed on 5 inch gun mounts 51 and 52 and the aft 20 mm gun mounts. Mount 52 was uploaded as the ready five inch mount as was the forward CIWS (Sector holdback tool inserted and firing integrity key removed.). The AN/SPQ-9 was placed in standby most of the time in the Gulf due to possible threat from J-band homing missiles.

On the evening of 24 Jul the TARAWA transitted the **Strait of Hormuz**. A challenge was received from the Omani navy and was answered without incident. The next morning while transitting westward in the southeastern **Arabian Gulf**, lookouts detected a sinking boat low in the water. Six survivors were sighted in a liferaft and Sideflare 67 was launched to perform a rescue. Six Iranian merchantmen were hoisted from the liferaft into Sideflare and returned to TARAWA. They were taking a cargo of produce from Bandar Abbas to Dubai when their vessel took on water. All were in good health and were taken to Bahrain where they were turned over to authorities. Later that morning an Iranian P-3 was sighted and challenged. It did not reply and overflew without incident. On 25 Jul TARAWA moored at **Mina Salman, Bahrain** for a tender availability with the USS ACADIA. The next day COMUSNAVCENT, Radm. R. A. K. Taylor, visited for a CENTCOM briefing.

On 31 Jul TARAWA got underway and proceeded north towards Kuwait for exercise **Eager Mace 92-3** anchoring in **Kuwait Bay** on 01 Aug. From 03 to 19 Aug, the Marines and their aircraft went ashore for joint interoperability training with the Kuwait armed forces. The exercise was highly publicized in the press and several visits were made to the TARAWA by local and international media. During the exercise one AV-8B and one AH-1J each crashed at night in the desert with no survivors. Upon successful completion of the exercise and backload of 11th MEU, TARAWA remained in the vicinity while **Exercise Native Fury** was conducted.

After the completion of Native Fury, TARAWA got underway and returned to **Bahrain** where repairs to No. 1 Main Engine were finally completed. Following a week inport, TARAWA got underway with two shafts again and returned to the **Northern Arabian Gulf** anchoring on 28 Aug in the vicinity of Ras Al Mishab, Saudi Arabia for exercise **Nautical Mantis**. TARAWA was anchored in the same location as in Feb 90 when elements of the Fifth Marine Expeditionary Brigade was offloaded to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi forces.

Upon completion of Nautical Mantis TARAWA got underway and proceeded to **Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates** for vehicle washing and to onload fuel.

After two days inport TARAWA got underway and departed the Arabian Gulf. TARAWA transitted the **Strait of Hormuz** early on the evening of 10 Sep and was once again challenged without incident by the Royal Omani Navy. Readiness Condition IV was set, mine watches were stood down, and the 5 inch gun and CIWS were downloaded.

While transitting the **Gulf of Oman** TARAWA received orders to divert from our track to Singapore and proceed to the vicinity of **Mogadishu, Somalia**. TARAWA arrived off Somalia on 17 Sep and on 21 Sep commenced operations in support of the transport of UN/Pakistani security forces into Mogadishu. TARAWA was tasked with providing command and control for the USAF Combat Control Team (CCT) and Mission Support Team (MST) supporting the USAF flight operations in and out of Mogadishu. TARAWA was also standing by for any possible SAR that might be required.

On 29 Sep the airlift of UN/Pakistani forces was completed and TARAWA was released from NAVCENT control inchopping to SEVENTHFLT on 30 Sep. On 30 Sep TARAWA commenced transitting to Perth, Australia making a brief stop for VERTREP at **Diego Garcia** on 4 Oct.

While transitting to Fremantle, Australia TARAWA conducted a **Crossing the Line Ceremony** on 02 Oct. During transit TARAWA recorded 55 Knot winds on 06 Oct and conducted a CIWS and 5"/54 PAC fire.

TARAWA moored in Fremantle on 12 Oct and commenced refueling. The port visit was a brief two day stay and TARAWA got underway for **Exercise Valiant Usher** at the Lancelin Operation Area on 14 Oct.

On 16 and 17 Oct TARAWA had to cancel wet well operations due to heavy seas. On 18 Oct during routine flight operations, a CH-53 helicopter lost it's nose gear while flying and had to make an emergency landing. The flight deck crew secured a mattress to a steel frame and the helicopter used this as a front stabilizer when it landed. There were no personnel injuries even though the helicopter was fully loaded with troops. TARAWA once again moored in Fremantle, Australia on 19 Oct.

After the completion of Valiant Usher TARAWA proceeded inport at Fremantle, Australia from 19th to the 26th of Oct. During Valiant Usher the TARAWA had collected 15,000 dollars for a young girl named Julie Bruce. Julie Bruce had a serious blood vessel condition that required special treatments that could only be done in the United States. Her family was not able to afford this, officer's and men of the Tarawa came to her aid. Other ships of the ARG also contributed. Officers and men of TARAWA came to her aide. The TARAWA also held two visit ships while in Fremantle and an estimated 15,000 people attended.

TARAWA once again got underway on 26 Oct. enroute to Guam. On the 30th of October TARAWA commenced the Archepalagic transit through Indonesia via Lombok and Makassar Straits.

TARAWA moored in Apra Harbor, Guam for a one day port visit on the 6 of Nov. The following day TARAWA got underway for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

From 7 to 16 Nov TARAWA transited the western Pacific enroute to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. During this underway period, TARAWA crossed the International Dateline on 13 Nov.

On 16 Nov TARAWA moored in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii for a one day of liberty, to take on stores and to embark Navy and Marine "Tigers". The next day TARAWA got underway enroute to Del Mar Boat Basin and commenced its Tiger Cruise. The Tigers were indoctrinated through numerous tours and completing a PQS syllabus.

On 24 Nov TARAWA anchored in Del Mar Boat Basin and began the off-load of the Marine Corps elements deployed on TARAWA. At the completion of the off-load dependents were brought on board for an overnight cruise to San Diego.

On 25 Nov TARAWA suffered a main steam leak in the Aft Main Machinery Room. The ship went to General Quarters. One man was reported burned and in need of a MEDEVAC. Cause of the casualty reported as rupture of 600 PSI steam root valve to the soot blower system. A Coast Guard helicopter arrived and the injured man was taken to the UCSD Burn Center.

TARAWA moored at Pier 7, Naval Station San Diego, 6 months after departing San Diego for Westpac '92.

A 30 day leave and upkeep period was scheduled and during this time a holiday standdown period commencing 18 Dec. was started. TARAWA was pierside at Naval Station San Diego on 31 Dec.


N. E. PARKHURST
CAPT USN